

How Do I Get More Information?

- Use the following to get more information on the study and comment on the Practical Alternatives.
1. Attend the Public Meeting on February 9, 2005 at the Michigan Technical Education Center at St. Clair County Community College on the corner of Erie Street and Glenwood Street in Port Huron. Sessions run from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.
 2. Call the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study Toll-Free Number: **1-800-955-3515**
 3. Visit the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study Web site at: **www.michigan.gov/mdotstudies**. Alternatives will not be posted on the Web site until after the public meeting.
 4. Write to:
Bob Parsons, Public Hearings Officer
Michigan Department of Transportation
425 W. Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909
E-mail: mdot-bluewaterbridge-study@michigan.gov

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Did You Know?

- The existing plaza has 14 inspection booths for cars and trucks entering the United States. A new plaza is expected to require 34 booths by 2030.
- The existing plaza has approximately 50 parking spaces for trucks. A new plaza would have 112 to 150 parking spaces for trucks.
- The existing plaza has approximately 40,000 square feet of building space. A new plaza would have approximately 135,000 square feet.

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Public Meeting - Study Update

Wednesday February 9, 2005
4:00 - 5:30 P.M. and 6:30 - 8:00 P.M.
Michigan Technical Education Center
St. Clair County Community College
Corner of Erie Street and Glenwood Street, Port Huron

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is holding a public meeting to provide an update on the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study. You are cordially invited to attend either session of this meeting to obtain more information on the study and provide comment on the alternatives.

The meeting will be in an open house format. You will be able to view exhibits including the study area,

purpose and need, study process, schedule, environmental issues, and the alternatives. Attendees will also be able to speak one on one with study team members.

Comment forms will be available for participants to comment on the alternatives, identify concerns, and offer suggestions. You are encouraged to fill out a comment form and make your thoughts known.

Study Requires an EIS

The study requires completion of an environmental document prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The environmental approval document required for the study has been upgraded from an Environmental Assessment (EA) to a more extensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The study began as an EA in September 2002. MDOT has identified potentially significant impacts and has concluded that an EIS should be completed. The potentially significant impacts of the alternatives include: community impacts,

relocations, visual impacts, and changes to the local traffic network.

The change from an EA to an EIS will add approximately one year to the length of the study. MDOT first will produce a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). MDOT then will hold a formal hearing for public comments on the environmental analysis before producing a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). More details on the study process are contained on the next page. The study will now be completed in 2006.

EIS Study Process

The product of this study will be a plan for plaza improvements until 2030, along with Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Since September 2002, the study team has identified environmental, traffic and engineering issues within the study area and has worked with the plaza agencies, local officials and other stakeholders to develop objectives for the study. The study team has also identified the plaza facilities that need to be accommodated. Alternatives for improving the United States Blue Water Bridge Plaza were developed

based on this consultation and analysis. MDOT held a public meeting on March 13, 2003 to introduce the study, a second public meeting on September 23, 2003 to present a set of six Illustrative Alternatives and a third public meeting on May 17, 2004 to present three Updated Alternatives. Members of the public have commented on the project at each of these meetings.

Since the last public meeting, the study team has used the public and agency comments to reduce the list of alternatives to two Practical Alternatives. The Practical Alternatives have undergone detailed environmental, traffic, and

engineering analysis and will be discussed in detail in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to be produced later this year. A formal Public Hearing will then be held so that members of the public can comment on the alternatives and the detailed analysis.

After the Public Hearing, a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be produced that identifies one alternative as the Recommended Alternative. After a further public comment period, a Record of Decision will be issued formally selecting the alternative for final design and construction. The study will be completed in 2006.

Purpose and Need for Improvements

The Blue Water Bridge is one of the key transportation links in North America. It is the fourth busiest crossing between the United States and Canada, and the second busiest truck crossing between the two countries.

The following are some of the reasons MDOT is studying potential improvements to the United States Plaza at the Blue Water Bridge:



Both Inbound and Outbound Traffic Backups are Common at the Plaza

Traffic Growth. The number of trucks crossing the Blue Water Bridge has increased more than 150% since 1990, and is forecasted to increase an additional 150% by 2030. Passenger traffic is expected to increase 71% over the same

period.

Traffic Backups. Long backups of cars and trucks waiting to enter either the United States or Canada

are common at the Blue Water Bridge. Backups create conflicts between cars and trucks on the plaza and the bridge and along I-94/69 and Canadian Highway 402. This partially results from inadequate parking for trucks requiring extra inspection or paperwork. Unless

changes are made, backups will worsen as traffic continues to grow.

Security. The plaza must accommodate security measures to allow federal inspection agencies to maintain a secure border. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, more staff and new technologies are being introduced at the border, which require accommodation.

Flexibility. The plaza must have space to address future, unknown security measures. Homeland Security procedures are constantly evolving and a new plaza must be able to accommodate future as well as current needs.

Alternatives Still Under Consideration

MDOT has eliminated Alternative 1 as a possibility for improving the Blue Water Bridge, narrowing the list from three to two Practical Alternatives. The Practical Alternatives will be understood best by viewing them at the public meeting on Wednesday February 9, 2005, although the following paragraphs briefly describe the alternatives and their anticipated community impacts.

Practical Alternative 2 (PA-2) - Relocation of Pine Grove Ave.

If PA-2 were implemented, it would bring most of the plaza down to street level. Pine Grove Avenue would be re-routed to the east of the existing plaza, between Hancock Street and Scott Avenue. Pine Grove Avenue and 10th Avenue would merge for a joint five-lane segment between Scott Avenue and Elmwood Street. PA-2 uses the block between Hancock Street and the existing plaza, west of Pine Grove Avenue for an expanded truck inspection area.

PA-2 requires property along Hancock St., Pine Grove Ave., Church St., 10th Ave., Elmwood St., Harker St., Mansfield St., 11th Ave., 12th Ave., Riverside Drive, Scott Ave., and Water St. PA-2 would result in approximately 80 acres of occupied residential and commercial

zoned land being converted to plaza use. PA-2 would result in approximately 147 residential relocations, 33 commercial relocations, and one church relocation.

Practical Alternative 3 (PA-3) - Relocation of Major Plaza Functions to Port Huron Township. If PA-3 were implemented, it would result in the



Aerial View of the Existing Plaza

construction of a new plaza approximately 1.5 miles west of the current facility, on undeveloped land. The existing I-94 / 69 lanes west of the plaza would be converted to a walled secure route to take vehicles between the new plaza and the Blue Water Bridges. The M-25 Connector would be extended to provide a local access road parallel to the existing I-94 / 69 with access to Water Street and the Lapeer Connector.

The current plaza footprint would

be unchanged. However, local traffic would no longer be able to exit at the existing plaza or use Pine Grove Avenue to access the plaza. All inspections would occur at the new off-site plaza.

For local traffic improvements, PA-3 requires property along Hancock St., Pine Grove Ave., 10th Ave., Mansfield St., Scott Ave., Riverside Drive, and Water St. PA-3 would

also require property along Maywood Dr. and approximately 130 acres of predominantly residential zoned, vacant land to be converted to plaza use. PA-3 would result in approximately 40 residential relocations and 16 commercial relocations. There would be no relocations of community facilities.

No-Build Alternative - A

No-Build Alternative, that would result in no changes to the existing plaza configuration and ramps is also under consideration. The only change for the No-Build Alternative is an expansion of the I-94 / 69 Bridge over the Black River from four lanes to six lanes. The No-Build Alternative is being assessed to assist in the evaluation of the impacts of the other alternatives and could be selected if the benefits of the improvements do not outweigh the impacts.